



building brighter **futures**

First Annual Report **2002**



D.C. Department of Employment Services
Project Empowerment



Government of the District of Columbia
Anthony A. Williams, *Mayor*
Department of Employment Services
Gregory P. Irish, *Director*

Project Empowerment
Charles Jones, *Director*

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Director, DOES

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LETTER FROM GREGORY P. IRISH
DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

We intend to deliver quality to both sides of the employment equation. We'll help workers hone their skills and reach true career opportunities. We'll help businesses grow and thrive.

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Introducing the first annual report of Project Empowerment is a special pleasure for me, because the project is one of our flagship efforts to drive government employment services with private-sector energy. Our department wants to put “services” front and center in its title: services to career-seekers, services to employers, services that build the economic base of our great capital city.

We at the Department of Employment Services (DOES) are competing with sectors that already provide plentiful jobs. We want to reach out to more employer-partners not only in the District of Columbia, but across the metropolitan region. We want workers who live in the District to think of us as a service resource to further their careers and raise their sights—not just an agency with job listings.

Project Empowerment is one of the tools that helps us to train and support job-seekers from DC with placements throughout the region. It aims high, with a four-part mission:

- To reduce the number of District families on welfare;
- To help participants acquire the skills and knowledge to find and retain unsubsidized employment;

- To move long-term recipients of welfare into unsubsidized employment; and,
- To help participants in the program to aspire high and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Another key element is our department's service ethic towards the public. In effect, we say to Project Empowerment employer-partners: we'll give you a “money-back guarantee” by subsidizing the first six months of our participants' work for you—we have that much confidence in our training and skill-building. We say to employee participants: you're not cases, you're our customers. Train with us, learn from us, let us help you find a job and build a career.

The Department of Employment Services wants the look, feel, and top-flight service ethic of a customer-friendly business: we intend to deliver quality to both sides of the employment equation. We'll help workers hone their skills and reach true career opportunities. We'll help businesses grow and thrive. Project Empowerment's early results testify to the promise of our mission.

Gregory P. Irish



LETTER FROM CHARLES JONES
DIRECTOR OF PROJECT EMPOWERMENT
DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Since 2001, more than 2,100 participants and 65 businesses have joined our program. We boast a 97 percent rate of retention for local businesses that participate, so we must be doing something right.

We are delighted to present the first annual report of Project Empowerment, a program that is transforming the relationship of District residents to the employment and career services their city government offers.

Project Empowerment began in April 2001, a direct response to the 1996 federal law that, among other things, created the welfare-to-work program. Our staff has worked hard to match people who want to work with the jobs that suit them—jobs that can give them stepping-stones to a constructive, sustainable future. In the past year, our project has saved the government an estimated \$2.5 million in public assistance costs.

Early on, we realized that, in order to succeed, we must first empower participants, then inspire them to act. The action we've inspired helps them move into jobs. Many of our customers seek more education. We offer job-readiness training and support as they move into jobs. Our job coaches visit worksites and help our graduates to sustain their progress and obtain full-time, unsubsidized employment. We're eager for our people to be career-builders, not just job-seekers.

To minimize obstacles to our participants' productivity at work, we've partnered with more than 15 local and federal agencies and nonprofits offering support services: child

care, transportation aid, substance abuse treatment, housing, and professional clothing.

The other element critical to Project Empowerment's success is enlisting active employer-partners from the local and regional business community. To execute the Project Empowerment plan dedicated to quality, effectiveness, and sustainable job development, employers partner with us as well as other organizations and individuals to sharpen our participants' skills, inspire them to good work habits, and help them secure jobs that last.

Since 2001, more than 2,100 participants and 65 businesses have joined our program. We boast a 97 percent rate of retention for local businesses that participate, so we must be doing something right. Equally important, about half our participants are currently enrolled in our GED program, and more than 35 percent have completed it successfully.

We hope you will agree that we're not just moving people from welfare into work. We're also helping our participants plan and secure, as well as dream, a better future.

Charles Jones

I. Our Mission: Building Brighter Futures

Project Empowerment was created in April 2001, in response to the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Act of 1996. Project Empowerment is designed to provide comprehensive employment services to ensure a competitive workforce, full employment, lifelong learning, economic stability, and the highest quality of life for the citizens of the District of Columbia.

Our program was designed and developed with the customer in mind: the citizen wanting work and a brighter future. Before formulating program goals, objectives, and specific strategies, Project Empowerment staff members interviewed prospective participants and local employers to assess needs, identify challenges, and leverage opportunities. The result is a customer-focused program designed to both empower and inspire.

Project Empowerment differs from many welfare-to-work programs by focusing on continued self-sufficiency, rather than one-time job placements. We've built innovative partnerships with educational institutions, the business community, local government, regional agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Through partnerships, Project Empowerment seeks to fundamentally transform the lives and livelihood of individual District residents, one by one. Our strategy of integration—to partner and pool resources with other local organizations—yields

diverse kinds of support that raise the probability of sustaining individual success and self-sufficiency for our participants.

Four core goals embody our mission:

1. Reduce the number of District families on welfare;
2. Enable eligible individuals to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities to find and retain unsubsidized employment;
3. Move long-term welfare recipients into unsubsidized employment; and
4. Help participants in the program to set and reach career goals in order to arrive at economic self-sufficiency.

On the following pages, you'll encounter compelling statistics that quantify Project Empowerment's value to the community. You'll also read first-hand testimonials that give a personal dimension to those numbers and show how lives can change for the better through Project Empowerment.



II. Our First Two Years in Review

We Made a Name for Ourselves

Since it began in April 2001, Project Empowerment has made notable progress in achieving the specifics of its mission statement. The program's efforts have aided over 2,100 individuals and 65 businesses, and saved the District of Columbia an estimated \$2.5 million. This success grows out of the same culture of customer service that netted the Department of Employment Services two National Customer Service Awards from the United States Department of Labor in 2001.



We Supported Our City's Priorities

Project Empowerment plays a crucial role in moving closer to the goals articulated in the Department of Employment Services Strategic Plan—which in turn supports the overall vision and desired direction of the District of Columbia's Strategic Plan for our city's economic health and growth. Project Empowerment plays a critical part in placing people on the path to self-sufficiency, including placing them in jobs. Project Empowerment has made specific progress toward two goals in the DOES Strategic Plan:

- 350 TANF/Welfare-to-Work participants placed in unsubsidized employment; and
- 500 TANF/Welfare-to-Work participants in subsidized or transitional employment.

Recognizing the importance of transitioning employees from subsidized to unsubsidized work, 81 percent of participants in Project Empowerment's subsidized work program made the transition during the first year of the program's existence.

We Made a Difference to People and Families

In its relatively brief existence, Project Empowerment has made a tangible difference in the lives of District residents and business representatives—audiences that overwhelmingly support their Project Empowerment experience:

- Of the more than 2,100 participants in the program, 92 percent feel that Project Empowerment is placing them on a track to achieve their career goals; and,
- Of the nearly 65 employer-partners, 97.5 percent have renewed their partnerships with Project Empowerment.



III. The People We Serve: Our Participants

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Since its creation in April 2001, Project Empowerment has compiled an impressive array of statistical evidence that shows the program's value:

- More than 2,100 participants have joined the program;
- Approximately half of the participants are enrolled in the critical step of obtaining a GED credential (based on the General Educational Development tests that demonstrate skills equivalent to high-school graduation);
- 81 percent of participants in the subsidized work program were transitioned into unsubsidized employment during the program's first year;
- Of the participants who transitioned from subsidized to unsubsidized employment, 90 percent remained with the same employer-partner—a true measure of employer satisfaction;
- More than 766 long-term welfare recipients have moved from public assistance and found unsubsidized employment; and, most tellingly,
- 92 percent of participants feel that the Project Empowerment program is positioning them for sustained economic self-sufficiency.

While numbers offer a snapshot of Project Empowerment's value, the true measure of our program's



worth is found outside the realm of facts and figures.

We are giving former recipients of public assistance a realistic chance for success in the working world. Though the statistics demonstrate a measure of accomplishment from the general, bird's-eye perspective of policymakers, Project Empowerment is truly most impressive when seen through the eyes of more than 2,100 unique individuals and their families. Let us share some of their stories with you.

IV. Their Success Stories

RAYCHON DANIELS
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

At 42 years old, I was at a crossroads in my life. I spent years battling personal problems, including drug addiction and low self-esteem. I felt as if I had been going through a revolving door for years. I felt like I hadn't succeeded at anything. I was at rock bottom.

Two things gave me the courage to take charge of my life. One day, I looked up and saw, hanging on my wall, certificates I had received when I was young. That told me that I had what it takes to accomplish anything. The other was that my eldest son told me I was going to be a grandmother. I had let my sons down and I didn't want to repeat the same mistake with my grandson. I wanted to be the type of grandmother to him that my grandmother was to me and to heal the relationship between my boys and me. In short, I knew I had to change my habits, renew my faith in myself, and focus on succeeding at something.

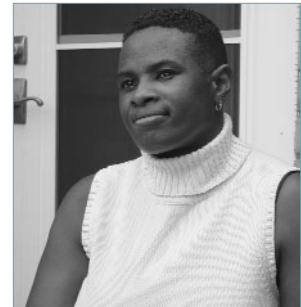
I heard about Project Empowerment through a friend. Though I was very skeptical at first, I decided to attend the orientation. My skepticism and cynicism disappeared as soon as I entered Project Empowerment offices and met the staff. They were so welcoming and hospitable.

Change begins with you. You have to truly want to change your life for the better. Project Empowerment offered me the opportunity to do just that.

—Raychon Daniels

It didn't matter where I came from or what I had been doing all my life. What mattered was that I was there. They were going to do everything in their power to help me. The catch? I had to really want to make a change. They don't want folks who are there to waste time, fool around, and not take the program seriously. That nurturing, but tough-love, environment was just what I needed.

From that point on, there was no turning back. I graduated last April and was placed in healthcare and administrative positions. From these two work experiences, I learned something about myself. I love working in healthcare and I have the skills to successfully contribute in an office setting. I'm working fulltime as an Administrative Assistant for the DC Government while trying to earn my certification in medical assistance at a local college. I feel good about my decision to complete the program. I feel as if I've been given a new lease on life and I intend to make the best of it—for me, my boys, and my grandson.





PRATHER ELLISON
AIRPORT SECURITY GUARD

I got out of the military in 1997 and moved back to DC. My girlfriend became pregnant and when my son was born, one day she just dropped him off at my home and never came back. The courts tried to take away my son, but I fought for him and

got custody in December 2001. I have been taking care of him by myself since. My motivation to participate in Project Empowerment was simply that I needed to find a way to prove to the courts that I could take care of my son. I was a father and I felt that I needed to do the right thing and take care of my own responsibility. My son is all I have, and I am all he has.

I had a job, but the company sold out and I was left unemployed. I applied for public assistance because at the time it was the only option I had while I'm getting my life together. I found out about Project Empowerment through a representative at Shaw Collaborative Community Service, where I went for housing assistance. She told me that Project Empowerment is where I needed to turn to for help.

My son will soon be 4 years old and I can see the impact my working has on his life. He's happy. I can give him the things he needs and I do not have to depend on anyone or take people's handouts. It's actually very empowering to be able to do that.

—Prather Ellison

I went to Project Empowerment and took full advantage of the job-coaching program. They taught me how to present myself in interviews and conduct myself in a professional setting. They offered valuable tips—simple, but necessary things—to help me make a good impression. I now work at Global Aviation as a security guard and love my job. My son will soon be 4 years old and I can see the impact my working has on his life. He's happy. I can give him the things he needs and I do not have to depend on anyone or take people's handouts. It's actually very empowering to be able to do that.

This job has really helped me to feel more like a responsible man, knowing I can stand on my own two feet and take care of my responsibilities. I don't have to worry about where my next meal is coming from or how I will provide for my son. I've moved into my own place. I can do things for and with my kid and that, for me, is one of my greatest joys.

I plan to return to school to get my universal license in air conditioning, heat, and refrigeration, then start my own business. I know now that I can accomplish anything if I set my mind to it. I have a positive take on life and it feels wonderful. My future looks good. My son's future looks brighter.

I feel that I now have professional stability—which makes me and my family feel more secure. Project Empowerment has helped me to define a career—not just find a job—in the asphalt trade, and I love it!

—Erick Villalta

SHEMEKA & ERICK VILLALTA
CORRESPONDENCE CLERK & ASPHALT WORKER

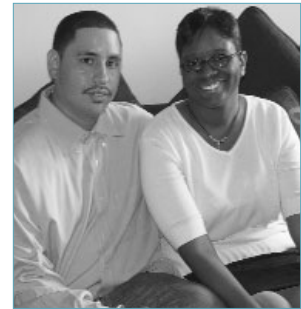
I woke up one morning, worried. My husband Erick and I were separated and I was left taking care of our three sons, ages 4, 5, and 7. I had no professional experience and no idea about what was going on with my marriage. I felt stuck! So, I reluctantly applied for public assistance. That's how I learned about Project Empowerment and decided to give it a try. I didn't want my kids growing up knowing that their able-bodied mother was collecting welfare. I wanted them to know the value of working and being self-sufficient. I wanted them to understand that nothing is owed to them, and that if they need something, they must work for it.

One of the things that immediately drew me to Project Empowerment was their child-care assistance. It was extremely important for me to know that my children were safe while I was at work. That gave me peace of mind. I took advantage of everything the program offered. While I was busy preparing myself for the job market, my husband and I began working on rebuilding our marriage.

Erick was also unhappy at his job and felt that he would never advance. He wanted to try something new. I

encouraged him to participate in Project Empowerment, and when he saw its benefits and how much it helped me, he decided to give it a try. We're now both permanently employed by the District of Columbia. Eric works as an Asphalt Worker in the Department of Public Works, and I am a correspondence clerk in the Department of Employment Services. Our combined income makes it possible for us to do things we never thought we could do before. If our children are sick, we take them to our personal family doctor without worry about the cost. We're able to take vacations together, spend more quality time with our children—helping them with their homework and just doing fun things with them.

Most important, our sons see their parents getting up each day, going to work, and trying to make their lives brighter and happier. We feel truly blessed as a family.



V. Ready, Set, Go: Preparing Our Participants for Work

Training and Job Readiness

Project Empowerment believes that a successful transition to permanent employment requires in-depth training. Our program guides participants through 8 steps to work readiness:

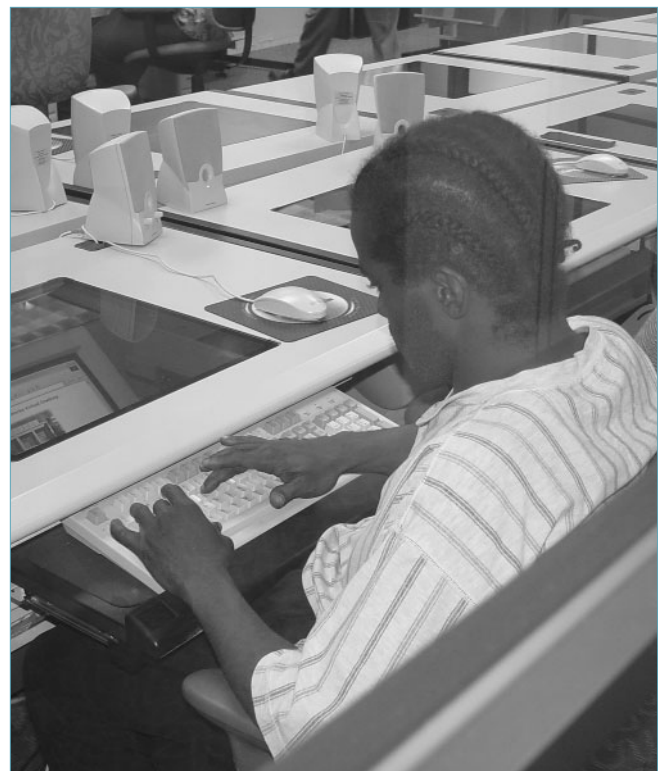
- **Orientation.** All participants receive a one-day introduction to the program, its expectations, and our services.
- **Case Management and Pre-Employment Assessment.** Staff help identify and analyze each individual's skills, abilities, interests, and hobbies. This information helps compose an employment plan to match each participant with the right job.
- **Job Readiness.** During an intensive 3-week pre-employment program, participants can acquire the professional and life skills employers demand: promptness, planning, professional dress and demeanor. Workshops facilitated by business managers, video-taped mock interviews by staff, occupational skills training, and mobile job coaching units are available to help.
- **Support Services.** We help participants overcome the usual barriers to employment: child care, transportation, professional clothing, etc.
- **Educational Options.** We offer skill enhancements such as vocational education and adult basic education through a GED program.
- **Subsidized Employment.** Participants without work experience are placed in temporary positions for up to 16 weeks in order to learn the skills productive employees must have.
- **Unsubsidized Employment.** Participants who show job readiness and employability enter the Job Club, where for up to one month our staff works tirelessly in helping them search for permanent full-time jobs.
- **Follow-up for Job Retention.** Staff stay in touch with participants after they find work. We support our customers, even sending job coaches to worksites to assess whether extra help is useful, and whether employers continue to be satisfied with Project Empowerment workers.

Educational and Other Partnerships

To lower barriers to productivity, Project Empowerment relies on a network of local and federal agencies, organizations, and educational institutions. They offer assistance both before and during a participant's employment. Our partners indispensably support our comprehensive, holistic approach to sustainable employment services.

Our organizational partners are diverse:

- DC Department of Human Services (child care)
- DC Department of Health (substance abuse counseling; physical exams)
- DC Public Schools (adult basic education)
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)(transportation assistance)
- Prince George's County Workforce Services (training)
- Suited for Change (professional clothing)
- DC Housing Authority and Coalition for the Homeless (housing)
- Sylvan Learning Center (GED preparation)
- Adult basic education, ESL, and math skill development affiliates
- Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("Money Smart" financial literacy teaching tools)
- Citibank (training in "Money Smart" units; checking and savings accounts)
- Internal Revenue Service (help with tax returns)



VI. Beyond Jobs, the Promise of Careers

Support Services and Lifelong Learning

Project Empowerment understands that finding a great career is more important, in the long run, than finding a great job. Before helping participants locate specific employer matches, Project Empowerment staffers focus first on identifying the participant's specific interests and abilities. Then our program aims to cultivate relevant skills and talents through training exercises and partnerships with educational institutions. Specifically, Project Empowerment has:

- Partnered with the DC Public Schools, Sylvan Learning Center, and other local learning institutions to ensure that participants have access to adult basic education, English as a second language courses, math skills classes, and GED preparatory courses;
- Assisted more than 84 percent of program participants in acquiring the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities to find and retain unsubsidized employment;
- Empowered nearly 50 percent of program participants to enroll in a GED preparatory program; and
- Helped more than 35 percent of program participants complete the GED preparatory course.

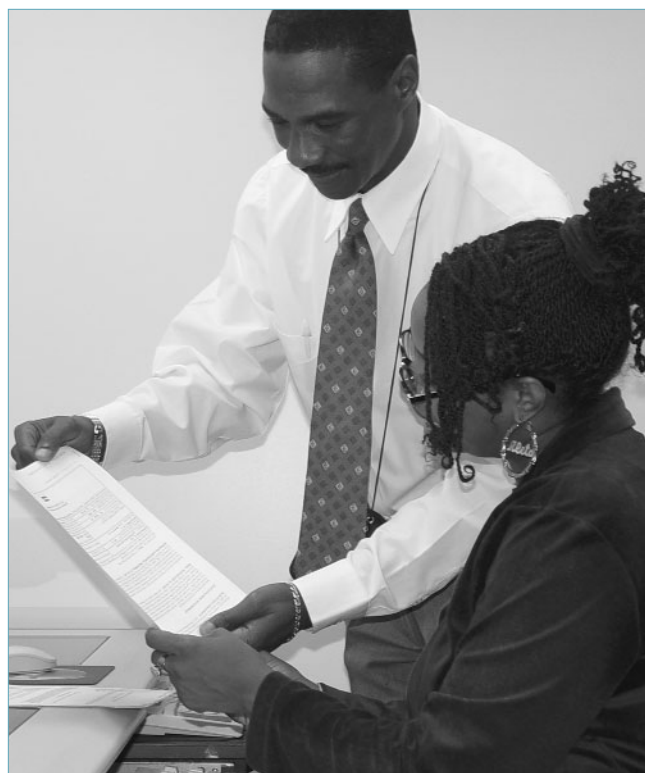
Workshops, Follow-Up, and On-the-Job Support

A unique benefit of the Project Empowerment program is the ongoing relationships formed between staffers and program participants. The skills and job readiness of each program participant are assessed, resulting in a tailored match between program participant and the specific requirements of each position. This individual level of service from Project Empowerment continues after each participant finds a job:

- Project Empowerment staffers stay in touch with employed program participants to monitor progress, offer support, and ensure continued success;
- Referrals to partner organizations and educational institutions may be recommended, including skill enhancement opportunities through vocational education and adult education classes; and
- Occupational skills training, where employees are custom-trained for up to six months for a specific job, is also available at no cost to the employer.

Supportive Services

Project Empowerment was designed to eliminate well-known barriers to employee reliability and productivity. Often, job-seekers are hampered by family responsibilities, inadequate housing, single-parent status, lack of transportation to distant work sites, and so forth. To overcome such barriers, we offer assistance with transportation, child care, and professional clothing, for example, through partnerships with local organizations and affiliated government entities.



VII. The Employers We Serve: Success Stories

Employers turn to Project Empowerment for a multitude of reasons. With program benefits ranging from free employee training to prescreened job candidates, tax incentives, ongoing workshops, and follow-up monitoring, it is easy to understand why Project Empowerment boasts a 97 percent rate of retention among local businesses. Listen to the appreciation expressed by several Project Empowerment employer-partners:

Debbie Tate

Terrific, Inc.

I was attracted to Project Empowerment because I had a tremendous need to hire a large volume of workers and I had tried everything else. What you see is what you get. The information provided at the first meeting is true to the practice of the program.

Donald Ferrell

DC Department of Public Works

The attitude that the Project Empowerment participants in my crew bring with them to work is nothing short of an employer's dream. They bring energy and enthusiasm, which lifts other workers' morale. They are on time. They have many of the work values that employers want and need. And the appreciation they show for learning this line of business is amazing. I wouldn't trade the participants who work in my crew for anything.



Based on my experience, it's obvious Project Empowerment does an excellent job preparing its participants for jobs. I've been very pleased with the people on my team; they are professionals who conduct themselves as such. Those we've hired permanently are now family...not just workers. We look out for them and help them along the way.

*It's a good feeling to help someone get their life together,
while making a good investment for your business.*

— Joyce Rawlings

The District is truly blessed to have a program like this. It picks people up, dusts them off, and puts them back on the right track— toward economic self-sufficiency. In the end, every one wins. Project Empowerment participants get a good job with benefits. The community gets more productive citizens. As a supervisor, I get good, no-nonsense, hardworking employees, whose goal is to get the job done. Case in point: I've been with the DPW for 17 years and we've never been caught up with fixing potholes—until now. Right now, we can start focusing on fixing sidewalks, alleys, and paving roads. Everyone benefits. While we're rebuilding the community, Project Empowerment is helping people rebuild their lives.

Joyce Rawlings
Global Aviation

The Project Empowerment participants are doing a wonderful job. That's always pleasing, when I can report that employees approach their work with eagerness and professionalism through their attendance, reliability, and dependability. The positive attitude says wonders about the preparation they've gone through in order to get where they are.

The security business needs people who are responsible, dedicated, and have a sincere interest in maintaining the security and safety of other people. Project



Empowerment participants approach their jobs with those qualities.

What impressed me about partnering with Project Empowerment is that there's actually an initiative out there that focuses on giving an important sector of our community a measure of confidence necessary to make sensible decisions and move into satisfying careers. The staff's involvement in participants' lives, even after they are placed in jobs, and their sincerity at finding out how their business partners are doing, reflects true professional partnership.

VIII. Building Business Partnerships

2001-2002 Partners

More than 60 businesses in our area have joined forces with Project Empowerment for all their recruiting, staffing, and training needs. These businesses include:

Admiral Security
All Nations Child Development Center
Alston & Associates
American Recovery Strategy
Aramark
ART Management
Best Beverages
Bolling AFB
Catholic Charities Model Cities
Check N' Go
Community Academy Charter School
Culi Services
CVS
DC Care Consortium
DC City Council
DC Commission on Arts & Humanities
DC Commission on National & Community Service
DC Dept. of Banking & Financial Institutions
DC Dept. of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs
DC Dept. of Parks & Recreation
DC Dept. of Public Works
Enterprising Staffing Services
Family Practice Medical Service
Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative
Full Gospel Child Development Center
Genesis Group
Giant Foods
Global Aviation
GQ Security Services Inc.
Graham Home Health Aides
Grant Park Care Center
Hospital for Sick Children

Ideal Academy School
Lewis Technologies
Louise Lisner Residential Home
Marriott
Meridian Public Charter School
Methodist Home
Murry's Groceries
National Center for Strategic Planning
National Children's Center
National Institutes of Health
National Newspaper Publishers
Navy Yard Lodge
Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Pavilion Café
Payless Shoe Store
Pinpoint Cleaning
Safeway
Second Chance Employment Services
Securpros
So Others Might Eat (SOME)
Social Security Administration
STG, Inc.
Telecommunications Access
Terrific, Inc.
The Washington Project
The Way of the Cross Child Development Center
Things Graphic & Fine Arts
Unity Health Care, Inc.
Veterans' Affairs Medical Center
Ward & Ward Halfway House
Washington Informer
Washington Nursing Facilities
WINN Management

Partnership Details

Project Empowerment offers local businesses a convenient, well-supported way to boost their bottom lines. We connect employer-partners with prescreened, qualified workers to help local businesses reduce costs associated with hiring and training new employees. Additionally, we pay the salaries of new hires for up to six months while they begin their employment with our partners. Here are some facts about employer-partnerships we've developed since launching in April 2001:

- 65 employer-partners have joined Project Empowerment (see list in box on page 20);
- The business retention rate of our program is a near-perfect 97.5 percent; and
- 90 percent of employees (our participants) who transitioned from subsidized to unsubsidized employment remained with the same employer-partner—a true measure of customer satisfaction in the business community with Project Empowerment graduates.

Think Local, Act Regional

The Department of Employment Services' strategic goals include broadening the job market for DC residents to all the jurisdictions in our region—Northern Virginia, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, for starters. Economic activity ignores political boundaries, and many job openings DC residents could fill are located outside city boundaries.

DOES and Project Empowerment actively seek to partner with region-wide employers as well as DC-based businesses. Together with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and other partners, we're thinking about the transportation and other assistance participants may need to reach jobs far from their homes.

Many jobs in our region go unfilled. Project Empowerment aggressively works with regional employers to assist in matching open jobs with our participants and graduates. **Call us!**

IX. Our Services to Employer Partners

Types of Employment

Project Empowerment acts for employer-partners as a virtual human resources department, taking much of the guesswork out of an employer's hands. The level of personalized service we offer ensures a qualified match between employer and participant. The Project Empowerment staff assesses the skills and job readiness of each program participant first. These employment options come next:

- **Subsidized Employment.** Participants who lack work experience are placed in temporary positions for up to six months. Project Empowerment pays the participants' salaries, while they acquire the skills and experience needed to obtain permanent full-time employment.
- **Unsubsidized Employment.** Participants who have skills and job readiness are assigned to the Project Empowerment Job Club. For up to four weeks, Project Empowerment helps participants in the Job Club find the perfect, full-time position. For businesses, this process results in a good match between positional requirements and the skill levels of our participants.



Business-Building Services

Project Empowerment can also call upon the small-business incubator program established at the Department of Employment Services in 2002, to assist its employer-partners in improving their own skills and managerial processes. Staffed by the department and the small-business development center of Howard University and other local institutions, our DOES small-business incubator can even offer short-term office space for entrepreneurs until they are well-launched. Computer services and skills are among the center's offerings, with expanded services arriving in the coming months.

X. Where We Go From Here

Project Empowerment is planning further improvements on all fronts over the next two years.

—Charles Jones

Staff hiring is focusing on greater diversity, to reflect the growing cultural diversity of District residents and businesses.

An aggressive outreach campaign has begun, seeking more employer-partners and more participants in the program. We aim to recruit employers throughout the region, not just in the District of Columbia, because we know jobs cross political boundaries.

We will continue to work with the very low income population, including noncustodial parents and ex-offenders. These DC residents need the same intensive services Project Empowerment offers to other participants. We're working to help this population sharpen job skills and improve their chances of finding meaningful employment.

Our over-arching goal for the next few years is to transform Project Empowerment into a one-stop center. Participants need training and services that are not just relevant, but convenient. We want to have as many support partners as possible available to participants—for example, the IRS to ensure that participants understand tax benefits and incentives available to low-income families, and the FDIC offering money-smart curriculum to teach money management.

If participants are interested in starting their own businesses, they can join workshops at DOES' Business Resource Center for entrepreneurs and small-business owners, run in partnership with Howard University and the North Capitol Neighborhood Development organization. All these initiatives build leverage and widen opportunities for participants in Project Empowerment.

Smart Business. Dedicated Workers. Project Empowerment is off to a good start after its first year, but the race we are running is a marathon. We look forward to your interest and inquiries. Ask how we can help your business or your aspiration to build a brighter future.

**Contact Project Empowerment at 202-698-5599
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